Florian Lauda

Tibetan Medicine

and

Mind Training

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Tibetan Medicine and Mind Training

by Florian Lauda

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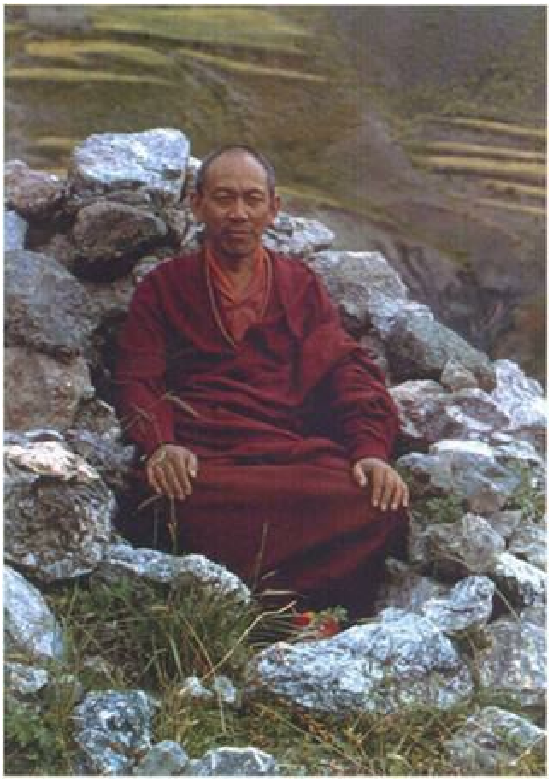
My special thanks to the Honorable Trogawa Rinpoche for his tireless work for the Dharma and for the spread of Tibetan medicine in the Himalayas and in the West. I also wish to thank the many Tibetan lamas I have had the honor of meeting, and the people who have accompanied me in my numerous travels to India, Nepal, Tibet and Japan.



The Honorable Dr. Trogawa Rinpoche (1931 –2005)

Together with him, I founded Chagpori (the Society for the Advancement of Tibetan Medicine and Culture), in order that the wisdom of Tibetan medicine can be preserved. It has also been my great pleasure to sponsor his School of Tibetan Medicine in Darjeeling.

Inhalt

INTRODUCTION

MENTAL ILLNESSES

MIND TRAINING

THE PREPARATORY EXERCISES

SHINE OR THE PRACTICE OF DEVELOPING PEACE OF MIND

LHAG THONG OR THE PRACTICE OF TRANSCENDENT INSIGHT

THE RAINBOW BODY

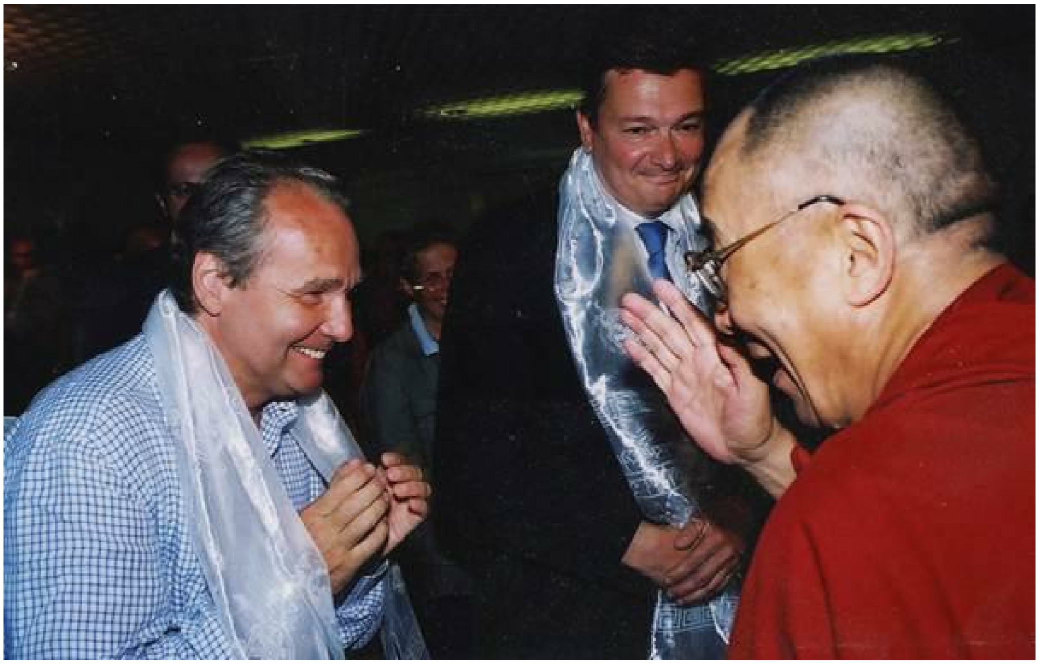
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tibetan Medicine and Mind Training

Introduction

This book is the result of long conversations with and the attendance of countless lectures by the Tibetan lama and physician, the Honorable Trogawa Rinpoche. I met him many years ago, at the first Conference on Traditional Tibetan Medicine in Venice. I was immediately struck by his tranquility and self-possession. He wore the robes of a Tibetan lama, and his eyes were hidden behind dark glasses. A palpable feeling of kindness permeated his lectures. I had the opportunity to speak with him several times; however, I first came to know him better while visiting a center run by another Tibetan lama in Tuscany. There, Trogawa Rinpoche conducted lectures on Buddhism and medicine at the end of the conference. When I learned that he was embarking on a lecture series throughout Europe, I spontaneously invited him to come and lecture in Vienna as well. This was the beginning of a friendship which lasted for many years, and which introduced me to the profound wisdom of Tibetan culture.
This book is intended to help its readers by demonstrating the necessity of – and possibilities for – developing the mind.

Florian Lauda



Mental Illnesses

Before I address the subject of mental illnesses, let me first say something about the relationship between body and mind.
The material basis for all living and non-living things are **the five elements: Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Space.**

On the ***physical level***, these take the form of

• Flesh and bones (**Earth**),
• Blood and lymph (**Water**),
• Metabolism and body heat (**Fire**),
• Nerve energy and movement (**Air**), and finally
• Consciousness (**Space**).

On the ***psychic level***, the **three mental poisons – greed, hate and ignorance** – are manifested in the body in the three humors. In Tibetan medicine, these are identified, respectively, as Wind (*rLung*), Bile (*mKrhispa*) and Phlegm (*Badken*). Any imbalance between these humors is expressed as illness.

On the **ethereal level,** the five elements manifest themselves in the fivefold light energies which form a human being's subtle body – *an energetic counterpart of the physical body, which gives it life and keeps it alive. According to the Tibetans, these ethereal forms of the five elements, in turn, originate in the* ***Wisdom Mind***. It is ***empty, luminous and unchangeable***, and represents the still-unformed ***"true nature of our minds."*** All karmic and psychic energies flow into the Wisdom Mind. It is the basis of all mental creation, and is described as a wind which **resides in the channel of the heart**.

We can discover this true nature of our minds when immersed in meditation. According to the Tibetans, these ethereal energies carve a system of channels in our bodies which is different from the energy paths of the nerves. The closest comparison would be to the meridians in acupuncture. However, the Tibetans conceive of an anatomy of the subtle energy body and its centers which, in part, can only be made accessible to the consciousness through deep self-observation and concentration of the mind. The energy channel or energy vessel in the mental heart of our bodies creates a bridge between the body, its energy, and consciousness.

On this subject, the Hevajra Tantra says: *"Great wisdom resides in the body, but although it lives in the body, it does not originate from there."* It later states: *"The body contains 32 nadis (energy channels) and the system of four chakras."* The chakras are located at the navel, heart, throat and head. *"Candali blazes up in the navel. It burns the five Tathagatas… it burns Locana and the others… Ham is burned… and the moon flows."* Candali is the syllable "Ah," located below the navel. In Tibetan texts, Candali is translated as "Tummo." The syllable Ah, below the navel, and the syllable "Ham," in the head chakra, combine to form "AHAM," the flowing, transcendent "I." The Tathagatas are the five *Skandhas* or five aggregates. They are perceptions of the human body: form, sensation, perception, mental formations and consciousness. Locana is Earth, and the other Tathagatas are Water, Fire, Air and Space.

Our bodies are formed from our father's *sperm*, our mother's *egg*, and the wind of karma – a being made from the intermediate state between death and rebirth. During conception, the karmic wind mixes with the energy from the elements of the body and grows into a body-mind organism. However, we are integrated not only with this brief lifetime; rather, our organisms are also connected to countless past lives.

From the point of view of Tibetan medicine, illnesses can manifest themselves in two different ways: externally, as physical illness, or internally, as mental illness. This means that mental illnesses do not always originate from mental disturbances, and physical illnesses do not necessarily originate in the physical body. Rather, a mental illness may have its basis in a physical disorder, and vice versa. This is due to the fact that *body* and *mind* form one interdependent whole – and at the same time, they may not be viewed as separate from the *environment* and the *circumstances of one's life*.
We can distinguish between different mental illnesses by dividing them according to the time of their development – that is, the stage of life in which they first occur. There are some mental illnesses which are **present from the very beginning of life**, and which are closely connected to the person's own being. Others occur **over the course of a lifetime or with the development of an individual's personality**.

In the case of a child who is born with a mental disturbance, this illness may have arisen before birth – that is, during pregnancy, due to a **shock** or **prolonged stress** to which the mother may have been exposed. The mother's **diet and behavior** can also influence the unborn child's state of mind. However, this is usually not the cause, since in most cases a disturbance in brain function is already present in the child's genetic makeup. Nevertheless, we have seen repeatedly that when a mother is subject to prolonged psychological and physical stress during her pregnancy, the child is born with a tendency to stress and nervousness. This disposition, acquired during pregnancy, may not necessarily

manifest itself immediately and directly. However, this tendency to nervousness, which is present in a latent form, may become acute –for example, in the form of a breakdown – if the person is exposed to extreme situations in his or her lifetime due to outside circumstances or poor nutrition. Among the mental illnesses which are present from birth onwards, some are clearly evident, while others may not be immediately recognizable as possible psychic disturbances, but may erupt later in life.

Not all mental illnesses are already present at birth. A person might also suddenly become mentally ill at some stage of his or her life. The child's early experiences – above all, his relationship to his mother and father, *whose characters he emulates and to whom he reacts, as well as his siblings* – have a lasting influence on his being. In the West, children are separated from their mothers in the first days of their lives, or directly after birth; later, during their first years, they are also left in the care of others or in a day nursery. This is not common in the East, and Tibetan physicians believe that a number of mental illnesses can be traced back to this early separation of mother and child – since at this age, the child might not be able to cope with the separation. Of course, one cannot generalize about this, since in my opinion, children are very different and they may react to these conditions differently depending upon their characters. Delicate, sensitive children will not accept such an early separation easily and may suffer damage from it; while children who are tougher, more robust and unshakeable may be able to tolerate it better.

Life has a natural rhythm, which we can understand and which we must take into account. Beginning at school age, it is important for children to learn and develop their minds. If a child cannot concentrate, expresses no interest in learning, wastes his or her time and remains behind other children in terms of learning, this can lead to problems later in life which are not easy to overcome, even if the child is emotionally and intellectually stable. This situation may not be obvious at the time; later, however, regret over lost opportunities in childhood and youth can pose a mental obstacle. On the other hand, people who have enjoyed and successfully completed a very intellectually challenging education are often not capable of coping on a personal and emotional level with the professional challenges which are presented to them as a result of their high qualifications. Such a situation can also lead to a breakdown.

In addition to school education, young men may be required to serve in the military, which can also be difficult to endure. Even if the worst-case scenario – a war – does not occur, it still exists as a possibility. It is often young people who are affected, and – particularly when they are very sensitive – they may not be able to accept the intense horrors of war; they will inwardly struggle against them and sustain mental injuries as a result.

These are psychic disturbances which are caused by **fear and terror** that a person has experienced. However the opposite situation also exists – namely, mental illnesses triggered by **pride** or **intense aggression**. These mental disturbances occur when excessive pride in oneself or in a certain thing is in danger of being injured, a situation which can lead to intense aggression. If this aggression remains unresolved, the resulting frustration or repressed tendency to violence can bring about a mental disturbance. Thus, we have determined that certain experiences can trigger mental disorders; and in fact, there are many situations – namely, every type of suffering and pain – which can interfere with and disturb our mental balance.

So far, we have talked about the effects of impressions and experiences on our psyches. Here, we are referring only to our own individual relationships to the world, or the manner of our reactions. The situations and conditions to which we may react with mental disorders are manifold. What is also important is the way in which we cope with our work or with the environment and conditions of our lives, and whether or not we are content with them. **Prolonged dissatisfaction with our work, a sense of meaninglessness, annoyances which we are not in a position to change – all of these things have a negative effect on our mental state.** The same is true for our environment. **Increasing frustration with our work or living spaces, dissatisfaction and lack of success** can lead, over time, to mental disturbances and finally to a breakdown. If a person is already in an irritating situation, this negative state may be intensified by purely external circumstances, such as **eating habits and lifestyle**.

As we know, the mind influences the body. This proves that each individual represents a single unity, and that the body and the mind are interdependent. Thus, in the "Twelve Links of Dependent Origination," Buddha explained how all phenomena arise from their own unique chains of causality. There are certain influences which can disrupt the balance of the entire organism and thus lead to illness.

In the past, in many areas of the world, people believed in non-corporeal beings. Even today, in some regions, people are still very interested in ghosts and spirits and the influence that **non-corporeal beings** can have on the individual.

The **pollution and destruction of the environment** is a problem in many parts of the world. The balance of nature has been altered. Certain foods do not combine well with one another and can have a disadvantageous effect if they are consumed together. Everyone tries to remain healthy, and the means that we use to do so may be better or worse. Sometimes the actions we take are not the right ones. In Tibet, people say: "His efforts to heal his lungs led to a tumor in his liver." In other words, for example, a medicine we take to cure a cough might be harmful to the liver. The task of doctors is to help their patients, and therefore, they actively engage in healthcare measures. However, they must be extremely careful because if they do the wrong thing, they may harm the patient instead of helping him or her.

The influences which can disturb a person's natural balance are based on three different causes:

• the person`s individual karma
• external circumstances

- a combination of the two; actions in past and present lives as well as external circumstances.

Examples of **karmic illnesses** include birth defects – physical defects as well as mental disturbances. Some illnesses are more difficult to recognize as karmic illnesses, since they may not manifest themselves until later in life, even if they have been present in a person's genetic material from birth. It is also possible for certain genetic predisposition to exist which only becomes expressed as an illness because of particular life circumstances or habits.

Since mental processes take place within the subtle energy of the wind, external conditions can only influence the mind via the energy of the wind. As we have already stated, our bodies are made up of five elements, of which each one possesses an energy corresponding to its characteristics – the "wind (or energy) of the elements."

If the five elements shift out of balance, the result will be illness. The imbalance of the elements affects the mind via the energy of the wind, and an imbalance in wind energy creates an unbalanced mind. The element of wind – the *wind* of the wind – is directly connected to the mind.

The next subtle energy that the mind needs in order to function undisturbed is the wind or energy of fire. In the same way, a disturbance in the energy of the water or earth elements can bring the mind out

of balance. The mind is extremely receptive and reacts to any internal, physiological or external conditions or changes by adapting – or, depending upon the circumstances, counter-reacting. For example, the mental disturbance of aggression may be suppressed and only be present in the subconscious. However, through aggressive action, it may be possible to rid oneself of the problem that triggered the aggression, causing that aggression to disappear. A Tibetan proverb states: "The sickness of the conch shell may be healed by blowing into it."

The cause of a mental illness may be karmic, or it may be due to a person's life circumstances. The illness may be treated either actively or passively. **Passive treatment** generally takes place within the family. Under a physician's direction, the family serves the patient a specific diet; they give her medicine and behave according to the doctor's instructions. An **active treatment** consists of cauterization: this is targeted burning at appropriate points. The chances for healing depend upon the causes of the illness and/or the time at which it occurred. If the illness developed during the period before birth, healing will be more difficult, but it is not impossible. If the illness of schizophrenia has developed during a person's lifetime, it is usually curable.

Mental illnesses *can manifest themselves in two different ways:* ***insanity and dementia***. *Catatonia* is a form of insanity, whereas *epilepsy* is classified under dementia. External circumstances affect the mind either *directly via* ***wind*** or *indirectly via the* ***blood*** and in the circulatory system. Since the illness is primarily caused by a *confusion of the mind*, which shifts the wind energy out of balance – and since by nature, such wind-intensifying conditions tend to be light, raw and cold – we apply forces which have an opposite effect, such as softness, warmth, etc.

We can balance out an **excess of wind energy** caused by insufficient sleep, erratic and inadequate nutrition and a disorganized rhythm of life by *correcting our behavior,* eating warm food appropriately and regularly, and getting sufficient sleep.

There is yet another cause which can trigger mental illnesses: *an excess of positive and pleasant life circumstances*. If, from a person's birth onwards, he or she experiences only ideal circumstances with an absence of any kind of difficulty, then a baseless underlying anxiety may develop as the result of a lack of stimulus. Increasing mental confusion leads to neurosis and psychosis, of which there are various stages. It begins with restlessness and an unhappy frame of mind. If the person is at home, he wants to go out; if he has gone out, he wants to go back home. He does not feel at ease in any situation. A noticeable feeling of lightness develops, caused by an excess of wind. The person seems to be in a state of mental limbo, unsteady and inconsistent. He may also develop headaches or feelings of dizziness. Beginning with a buzzing in the ears, the person may perceive many things which others cannot hear. Some people may begin to whistle – not out of musicality or because it is their normal habit, but rather, due to an excess of wind. This may also cause the tongue to become dry and rough and stick to the roof of the mouth. The person may develop irregular pains between the ribs or in other parts of the body. The pain may also change or travel to different areas. These are typical symptoms of excess wind. There are many other symptoms as well, which occur somewhat irregularly. The person may experience a sudden urge to spit or a certain stiffness and lack of mobility; he feels stretched out or bent over – constricted, as if he were in shackles. Other symptoms are sudden pains in the head, the back, the chest or the cheeks. An outside observer can see that the person in question is incapable of working normally – that his activities move in a circle, without

actually accomplishing anything. When a person has reached this point, the stage at which we can speak of mental illness is not far away.

Typical symptoms of **dementia** are that a person does not continuously pursue an activity and is incapable of bringing it to completion. The person lacks coordination and a sense of time; he or she cannot remember what she did or ate on the same day, or how much time has passed. Things with which the person is normally completely familiar or knows precisely – what she wanted to do, or a familiar route – have suddenly disappeared from her memory. If the mental illness develops into insanity, the person's irritability and anger increase. He cannot focus his eyes; rage suddenly alters the color of his face; he does not seem to be fully in control of his speech; feelings of aggression erupt uncontrollably and excessively. However, he still has clear memories of the past and can therefore speak at length about past experiences and events of many years before.

One form of insanity is **paranoia or delusions of persecution.** The slightest incident can trigger a paranoid reaction. If the person does not understand a conversation, he will immediately interpret it to be directed against him. Bright light is also perceived as a threat. For this reason, a person suffering from paranoia will prefer to stay in the dark, which usually has a soothing effect on his mental state. The conditions which are helpful or harmful to a particular person's mental health will vary according to his or her personal habits and individual situation.

Some people require calm and quiet. In a calm and relaxed atmosphere, they are able to find their own inner calm again. Other people need a livelier atmosphere; they find relaxation in distraction. Silence can aggravate their problems, since it causes them to dwell on them constantly. These people find solitude intolerable; they require company in order to regain their mental stability.

Epilepsy – a mental disturbance which falls under the category of dementia – is associated with a temporary loss of consciousness. In traditional Indian and Tibetan medicine, this illness was called "Mirki." The cause of the illness was thought to be a parasite which, when awakened by light energy, would suddenly rise up; its sudden movement, in turn, triggered a seizure in the affected person.

What is important for us to note are the ways in which we can maintain and take care of our health!

In the case of **persons with wind-related problems**, it is common for their condition to worsen beginning around 4 pm and deteriorate increasingly throughout the evening hours and into the night. Within the rhythm of the organism's cyclical variations, this the time in which *wind* increases in relationship to the other elements. In addition, there are cyclical connections to the *phases of the moon*.

In ancient Tibetan medicine, people spoke of **"Lah-ne,"** which could be defined as the **center of one's personal force field**. Lah-ne follows **an orbit in the body which is connected to the cycle of the moon**. Beginning at the bottom of the feet at the time of the new moon, it rises along with the waxing moon until it reaches the crown of the head at the time of the full moon; from here, it begins its journey back downward. It is possible that this cycle is connected with the dilation of the pupils at the full moon. When performing cauterizations, bloodletting or surgery, one must take care not to disturb an area that is currently sensitized by Lah-ne. Massaging this area will have a beneficial effect;

however, an injury would have an adverse effect and should therefore be avoided.

When massaging the feet on the day of the new moon, practitioners use special oils made from medicinal herbs. The same procedure is used for massaging the top of the head on the day of the full moon; in this case, however, the medicinal herb oil is also exposed to the light of the moon. There is another **Lah-ne cycle which is connected with the seven days of the week**; here, the zenith at the top of the head occurs on Sundays.

In general terms, **Lah-ne is a type of light energy**, which radiates from different parts of the body at different times of the month. These sections of the body are called **Lah**. It occasionally happens that a person dies during surgery, even when the surgery is a minor one. I believe that this happens because the incision has penetrated the Lah-ne, immediately causing a major change in the body. It can also happen that a patient dies in spite of a successful operation – that he *loses his life*, so to speak. There are various things which can happen to the Lah which trigger major disturbances.

Lah may be lost, or partially split off – for example, in the case of a shock. This is evident when a person's energy is dwindling away. The person loses his or her luster and radiance; she becomes very poor and depressed. The symptoms of decreasing **Lah** are similar to those of dementia. We can observe that diminishing Lah is connected with many of the modern illnesses which are widespread today. **A person with strong and stable Lah has a strong charisma – a certain radiance.** This radiance, known as **Dang**, is not identical to the Lah itself, but it is dependent upon it. In Tibetan Buddhism, there is **a ritual whose purpose is to strengthen the Lah of a person in which it is decreasing**. When Lah is re-evoked through this ritual – which is a very complex one – the difference is quite evident. The person's radiance increases noticeably, and his or her power of expression is also altered.

There was once a 13-year-old boy who was very ill. He had a fever and an unstanchable nosebleed. When his nose was stopped up with cotton, the blood flowed into his mouth. Since he did not respond to medical treatment, his family asked a famous lama – a great leader of rituals – to visit the boy. The lama came and performed the ritual for strengthening the Lah and extending the boy's lifespan. He placed a vessel on a stand, and using a special object, he stirred butter into a liquid which was also sprinkled with turquoise. Turquoise stones symbolize Lah. He continued this ritual throughout the entire day. From time to time, he felt the boy's pulse to check the condition of the Lah – until finally, in the evening, he was satisfied with the results. On the following day, thanks to the stabilization of the Lah, the boy now responded to the medication to which he had not reacted before. This great lama was also an important physician. What is interesting is the fact that the boy only responded to the medicine after the ritual had been performed.

The question arises as to whether a loss of Lah can be attributed to ghosts and demons – or can ghosts, demons and magic only affect people whose Lah has been weakened? It is my belief that the state of a person's Lah has no particular effect on either ghosts or demons: they can affect people whose Lah is strong as well as those whose Lah is weak. Magicians can bring even very healthy people under their sway. On the other hand, if a person is under the influence of a ghost or a curse, something is certainly happening to the Lah. It may become greatly weakened and even disintegrate.

We will now look at ways in which we can take care of our health. We have already spoken about various circumstances – either in the period before birth or in later stages of life – which can lead to mental illness. We also addressed some of the symptoms of mental illness, which we divided into two categories, **dementia** and **insanity**. Now we would like to talk about treatment. In accordance with the four types of treatment in Tibetan medicine, treatment for mental illness consists of: **correction of living and eating habits, diet, the administration of medicine, and physical therapy.** Only minor disorders can be treated through diet and behavioral changes alone. In the case of more severe damage, patients are treated with medicine or, when necessary, an active method of treatment – not, however, to the exclusion of nutritional and behavioral changes.

A person who suffers from "weak blood" (low blood pressure), must avoid foods and beverages whose characteristics are light, cooling and raw. These include tea, coffee, goat's milk, goat meat and any burnt foods. Instead, foods should be heavy, warming and fatty. Meat soups and (in moderate amounts) alcohol are recommended. The quantity of alcohol which is beneficial to health is not very great, and it should not be exceeded.

Vegetarians should drink cow's milk and eat cheese. With the exception of buckwheat, all types of grain are recommended. The person should live a well-structured life; he or she should not skip any meals, but eat and sleep sufficiently and regularly. Excessive or "strong blood" is the result of excessive heat, fat and spices. Therefore, a person with this condition should avoid foods having these characteristics and instead consume foods that have the opposite effect: foods that are mild, dry and raw. The person should avoid yak and sheep meat, alcohol as well as salty and heavily spiced foods. He or she should not become overheated, expose himself to strong sunlight, or stay too close to a fire.

Both ailments – strong as well as weak blood – are characterized by a feeling of thirst. The difference is that the person with weak blood will be able to cope with the thirst better and will not always need something to drink. The person who suffers from strong blood, however, will experience a great urge to drink. In general, weak blood is the result of wind energy. Strong blood can be attributed to an excess of bile energy. A diagnostic technique is used to precisely determine a person's blood type. **The Tibetan concept of strong and weak blood seems to correspond to the Western diagnosis of low and high blood pressure.** However, this is not always the case, since a third possibility also exists – namely, that wind has entered the circulatory system and raised the blood pressure. In this case, a person's blood pressure will be high even if his or her blood is weak. This occurs in the case of people who are subjected to physical and psychic stress.

A large number of Indian soldiers are stationed in the Ladakh region. These soldiers come from the Indian lowlands. When they arrive at Ladakh's high altitudes, local doctors have observed that they have elevated blood pressure. *Normally, blood pressure drops at higher altitudes.* In this case, however, it rises because of the irritating wind, which affects blood circulation. We can visualize this situation with the help of a kerosene stove like those used in Asia. The stove contains a tank which is put under pressure using a pump. The stronger the pressure, the hotter the flame will burn. This effect is the result of the pressure and not of the petroleum, which is always the same. Weak or strong blood is related to the number of red blood cells. However, weak blood cannot be equated with anemia. In Tibetan medicine, this illness is a very different one. We call it "thin blood," and it is caused by an

excess of serum. However, it may also occur even if a person's serum levels are correct.

Certain foods should be avoided in the case of all mental disorders, or in the case of either strong or weak blood. These include every type of deep-fried food, such as French fries, doughnuts, etc. In the case of *strong blood*, a person should avoid foods and beverages with raw and hot characteristics, such as peppermint tea, nettle tea, game, hare and rabbit meat. Hares and rabbits are known to be very nervous animals; when they are kept in tiny cages, this condition is greatly exacerbated, and the animals may even suddenly die of fright. Rabbit breeders have confirmed that frequent consumption of rabbit meat can lead to nervousness.

The third blood type is weak or strong blood combined with wind in the circulatory system. Here, we are speaking of a combination of conditions; nevertheless, when preparing medicine, it is important to remember that the mixture of symptoms can produce its own unique effect. If wind is present in the circulation of a person with a weak blood type, spices such as nutmeg, cloves and caraway are recommended. If wind occurs in the circulation of a person with a strong blood type, saffron and red sandalwood should be used.

The physical therapy used for mental illnesses in Tibet is cauterization (burning). The instruments used for cauterization are an iron rod that is bent at the front with a gold tip, and an iron rod which is flat in the front with a hole in it. This iron instrument is laid on the body with the hole at the point that is to be cauterized. Using the iron rod that is bent at the front, the steel end – which has been heated to a glowing red – is pressed onto the point for approximately three seconds. If the steel tip has been sufficiently heated and glows with a light red color, the patient will not feel it.

Medications and diet are prescribed first, and when the patient has regained a certain degree of mental clarity, cauterizations are performed. However, treatment methods and viewpoints vary from one Tibetan physician to another. Some physicians choose to immediately attack the illness, and carry out cauterizations even in patients who are in acute crisis situations. I would prefer to begin with a gentler method, a less radical type of cauterization: here, a small sack is filled with ground caraway seeds, heated in hot oil and pressed onto the points to be treated. The treatment begins with the five points of the head – the "four gateways" and the crown of the head. If you measure two finger-widths above the ears using the thumb, you will discover a flattened area. The first two points are located here, on the right and left sides. The third point is the fontanels point. In order to use a finger-width as a standard unit of measurement, measure at the fingerprint height of the little finger.

If we measure beginning at the hairline, measurements will vary, since people who have higher foreheads also have higher hairlines. Measuring four finger-widths to the rear of the fontanel point – that is, 16 finger-widths from the tip of the nose – you will reach the crown of the head. Like the fontanel point, the crown is located on the center line of the head. The small sack of caraway seeds that has been dipped in hot oil should be so hot that even touching it briefly is nearly intolerable. Once it has been heated to this temperature, it should be pressed onto each of the points for one minute, one after the other. Afterwards, the treated areas should be massaged. This method of treatment is also very effective for more minor ailments caused by weak blood, such as insomnia, dizziness or ringing in the ears. In the case of epilepsy, the crown of the head is treated using a heated **golden needle**.

There are three additional treatment points located on the back. The first of these is that vertebra between the shoulder blades which protrudes the most when a person's head is bent forwards. One can either heat the point on the vertebra itself, or the indentation leading to the next lower vertebra. From this vertebra, we measure downwards along the spine to the next points, counting from one vertebra to the next. The distance between the tips of the vertebra is equal to two finger-widths – which corresponds to the length of the first thumb joint (measured up to the nail line). Two further points are located six and seven vertebrae below the first treatment point. The sixth vertebra point is the treatment point for the heart; the seventh vertebra point corresponds to the life-sustaining wind.

Another important treatment point is located on the chest, between the two breasts. We can find the exact center point by stretching a thread between the two breast points and dividing it in half. In patients suffering from weak blood, this point is also cauterized or heated. As therapy for the strong blood type, bloodletting is performed at the root of the tongue. If the blood is very excessive, bloodletting is also carried out in the crook of the arm; if it is less excessive, below the wrist. If the treatment does not need to be accomplished in a hurry, and the practitioner wishes to avoid bloodletting, he or she can first try to reduce the excess of blood using medication and then perform a cauterization.

When dealing with a mentally ill person, it is important not to think of him or her as being mentally ill, and not to treat her as if she were crazy. As much as possible, you should interact with her in a normal manner. Do not give her any more or less attention than you normally would, and pay as little attention to her illness as possible.

If you are dealing with a person who is suffering from **dementia**, you must help him or her to regain a normal and familiar pattern of behavior and to restore his relationship to his social environment. In doing so, it is best to return to behavior patterns which were already developed in the past and to familiar activities which the person enjoyed, such as painting, weaving, etc. You should make an effort to find such an activity for the person to participate in and allow him to slowly relearn it and carry it out. You must continue to help and support the patient until such time as he is capable of reassuming habitual behavior patterns in relationship to his environment. It is important not to demand too much concentration from the patient in the beginning. Here, playing a game can be a useful way of holding the person's attention.

There are some people who behave very strangely. At a certain monastery, there was one young monk who ran around in a confused and directionless manner, until at one point he hit his head very hard against a beam. This seemed to make an impression on him, because from that point on, he held his hand in front of his head when he ran, and stooped down repeatedly even when nothing stood in his way. Nevertheless, the blow seemed to have done him good, since his condition improved every day from that point on. Isn't that surprising? Why would this happen? A severe blow to the head suddenly directed the monk's attention to the danger of injuring himself. This was a healthy pattern of behavior which gradually restructured his mind and brought it back into proper order. The blow itself can only have caused a shock to his cranial nerves, which can lead to impairment of brain function.

In cases of **hysteria,** a sudden slap in the face can sometimes be helpful. Perhaps this is comparable

to electroshock treatment. This type of therapy is rarely used today; the only indication is in cases where the patient would die otherwise. Here, the patient is subjected to strong electric shocks. Since these are very painful, he or she is first placed under anesthesia. The electrical surge causes severe convulsions, similar to epilepsy. People who suffer from schizophrenia will feel better after an epileptic seizure.
There are widely varying types of cauterization.

For less intensive burning treatments, herbs are used. In Tibet, as in other parts of the world, practitioners use various herbs which are wrapped in paper to form small cones and burned at the treatment points. For treatments on the head, it is best to first remove the hair. A golden needle is used for treatments at the crown of the head. The tip of the needle is heated. The needle is extremely flexible, since it has been hammered from a naturally-occurring gold nugget which is found in eastern Tibet, and has not been smelted.

It is very important for us to learn how to ***use our minds properly***. This issue is very important for everyone – not only for people who have mental problems.
When we wake up in the morning, we should not jump out of bed immediately. Instead, we should sit quietly on the bed and slowly exhale all of the air from our lungs two or three times without thinking about anything for at least a few minutes. If we practice this exercise every morning, we will feel more relaxed overall, and it will be easier for us to deal with day-to-day stress.

When the sky is clear, we can also practice this exercise in the morning by going to a quiet place and sitting with the sun at our backs and immersing ourselves in the clear western sky for several minutes. In the evening, we sit with our backs to the west and look into the deep blue eastern evening sky. At noontime, if we have a few free minutes, we can face toward the north. If we also practice meditation exercises, they can be made even more effective when combined with this exercise.

On a riverbank, we look in the direction of the flowing water; when we rest while climbing a mountain, our gaze should be directed into the distance and not against the slope. At these moments, we should exhale deeply and refrain from following our thoughts for several minutes.

Life is uncertain. We do not know what will happen just a moment from now, or when we might suddenly be confronted with great difficulties. From one moment to the next, we might find ourselves in a desperate, terrible or very disappointing situation, or we may lose our livelihood or our purpose in life. Therefore, in order to remain mentally healthy, it is important to develop a frame of mind that will allow us to deal with even the greatest difficulties and disappointments.

Our mental health is extremely important; therefore, we should not become careless if we wish to regain our mental health. *If we compare our minds to a flower, this means that the flower should stay fresh. If we water it too much, the flower will begin to rot. If it receives too little moisture or too much strong sunshine, it will dry out. The flower is analogous to the mind, and the water symbolizes its cravings*. If we are excessively ruled by our wishes and desires, this is analogous to an excess of water, which causes a plant to rot. Excessive desire can lead to vanity, an exaggerated sense of oneself and to ambitions, fixations and possibly unrealizable goals – resulting in a perennial state of unsatisfied longing.

It is important to develop a minimum level of *contentment*, and to accept our lives and our situations the way they are. We can avoid excessive aggression or hate by coming to terms with our circumstances. In order to do this, it is necessary to develop *patience*. Through studying the Dharma or practicing religion, we can learn a great deal about these mental attitudes.

The great Indian master Shantideva said: *"The world is full of thorns; we can injure ourselves anywhere. We cannot cover the world with leather to make it less thorny, but we can wear shoes."*

In other words, we cannot always arrange our external circumstances in the way that we would like to. Since we cannot remove every difficulty from our lives, it is necessary to protect ourselves: **patience** offers this protection. On the subject of aggression, Shantideva said: *"Enemies have very little power in this life. They cannot do more than kill us. Our true enemy is the passion of hate." If we are ruled by hate, we not only make ourselves unhappy, but everyone around us as well – and hate will take us to Hell in our next existence. The habit of reacting with hatred has a very destabilizing effect on our minds. If we experience difficulties and disappointments, and other people cause us distress, we should remember that life in our world is not perfect; rather, this is a sign that it is imperfect. Therefore, it is possible that we will be confronted with difficulties in the course of our lives. No matter how difficult a situation we may find ourselves in, as long as we are capable of changing it, we have no reason to feel fear, despondency or despair. However, if the situation is hopeless, and there is nothing about it that we can change, then it is useless for us to worry."*

There are many religions in the world. In every culture, religion is regarded as something special because in religion, the personal experience of peace is valued as highly as it actually should be valued in life.

When we sit still and meditate, we create a center of peace within ourselves.

This experience of peace and calm does not vanish immediately when we arise from our meditation cushions; rather, it tends to accompany us throughout the day. ***This peace is not only the personal experience of a single individual; it is a radiance which spreads throughout his or her environment and to those around him.*** If we can find inner peace in meditation, we will be able to remain calm even in difficult and aggravating situations. At the same time, the people with whom we interact will be able to feel the radiance of our inner calm and become more peaceful themselves. The first thing that we can do is to come to peace within ourselves, to discover this feeling of inner calm. This will not only have a healing effect on our own minds, but it will also have a beneficial effect on others. A peaceful mind is connected with a pure mental attitude. ***In order to protect ourselves from mental illness, it is therefore best when we are able to find peace within ourselves.***

Three monks of the Drikung Kagyu Order at a long life initiation in the Phiang Monastery in Ladhakh

Mind Training

The leader of the Drikung Kagyu Order at a Phowa ceremony

The preparatory exercises

Before I begin discussing SHINE, I would like to point out that before devoting ourselves to the development of mental peace, it is necessary to learn the preparatory exercises. This is a system of **moral character building** and a **test of our motivations** for mental development. In addition, the preparatory exercises should include **physical and mental self-observation**. They should involve abiding with and experiencing the physical body as well consciously maintaining an overall mood of positivity and serenity.
In Tibet, the preparatory exercises are called **Ngöndro**. They are divided into *outer preparatory exercises* and *inner preparatory exercises*. In the outer preparatory exercises, we meditate on the **four fundamental thoughts that turn the mind**:

On the unique nature of human life and the opportunities that arise from it,

On the meaning of impermanence and death,

On the causes and effects of our actions, and

On our suffering within *Samsara*.

Among the inner preparatory exercises, we specify:

Taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We take refuge in Buddha as our teacher and example; in Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha; and Sangha, the community of practicing Buddhists.

The cultivation of love and compassion, called Boddhicitta.

The Vajrasattva meditation and the recitation of its mantra: this purifies the mind and speech and accumulates merit.

The practice of Guru Yoga: with this practice, we purify our minds with the mindstream of all the Buddhas.
In the practice of Ngöndro, we also speak of the accumulations which must be made. These consist of:

100,000 prostrations combined with 100,000 recitations of the prayer of taking refuge:

"From this moment on, until I achieve the essence of enlightenment, I take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha."

100,000 recitations of the hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva. In the preliminary phase of meditation, Vajrasattva appears above our heads. He sits on a lotus and a moon. He is transparent like a crystal. Light streams from his heart in all directions, to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the room. When they are touched by his light, they are transformed into Vajrasattva, and they fall from all directions into Vajrasattva's transparent body. This light fills his body completely. He is now the purifying essence of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Next, we say powerful aspiration prayers and ask for purification for ourselves and all beings. When Vajrasattva feels the energy of our aspiration prayers, his boundless sympathy is activated, and a stream of white light gushes over his right foot as it touches our heads, and pours into our bodies. This light streams into our bodies from above and fills them completely. All negative illnesses and all the transgressions in this life and in our past lives are forced out of the body. As we are being cleansed, we repeat the hundred-syllable mantra: "Om Benza Sato Samaya – Manupalaya – Benza Sato Tenopa – Tishtha Dri Do Me Bhawa – Sutokhayo Me Bhawa – Supokhayo Me Bhawa – Anurakto Me Bhawa – Sarwa Siddhi Me Prayaccha – Sarwa Karma Suca Me – Cittam Shreyang Kuru – Hum – Ha Ha Ha Ha Ho Bhagawan – Sarwa Tathagata – Benza Ma Me Muntsa – Benzi Bhawa – Maha Samaya Sato Ah." We repeat this as many times in one session as possible. In the resolution phase, Vajrasattva transforms himself into light and becomes one with our hearts. We then meditate on our condition as we recite the short mantra of Vajrasattva: "Om Benza Sato Hung."
100,000 recitations of the mandala offering prayer. The word **manda** means "the essence" or "the center" and **la** means "to encircle it." For the mandala offering, we need white rice, small gemstones

or semi-precious stones, and a set of mandala dishes. These usually come from India and are often made of copper. They are often available for purchase in Buddhist bookstores. In the practice of Ngöndro, we usually use only the base. Take it in your left hand and wipe it with the ball of your right hand: circle three times in a clockwise direction and once in a counter-clockwise direction. At the same time, we recite the hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva three times. Then we say: "Om Benza Bhumi Ah Hung," and pour a little water onto the plate. This symbolizes the creation of original consciousness. Next, take a little rice in your right hand and repeat: "Om Benza Ry Kay Ah Hung." We then sprinkle a circle of rice counter-clockwise around the edge of the plate. This symbolizes the magnetic field that holds the Universe together. Then, as we recite the text, we make 37 small heaps of rice on the plate: these symbolize the perfect Universe. The first heap of rice, in the middle, symbolizes Mount Meru. Then come the four continents in the four directions, and so on. The short mandala offering prayer in the Drikung tradition is as follows: "In the mandalas of the three times three thousand world systems and the ten thousand directions, there are many Mount Merus surrounded by continents and islands. They contain countless wonderful things. Please accept this offering and grant us the *Siddhis* at this moment."

100,000 recitations of the guru mantra. This practice varies according to the school of Tibetan Buddhism that one follows. Among the Nyingmapas, for example, the seven-line prayer of Guru Padmasambhava is recited 100,000 times; the Vajra Guru mantra, "Om Ah Hung Benza Guru Pema Siddhi Hung," is repeated 1,300,000 times.

In the Drikung tradition, the guru yoga mantra of Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön is "Om Ah Mamo Guru Badsra Dhrik Tre Lokja Natà Ratna Schri Mula Guru Maha Mudra Siddhi Pala Hung." The translation is as follows: "Om Ah Namo! Vajradhara (Dorje Chang – ultimate teacher), protector of the three worlds (Jigten Sumgön), radiant treasure (Rinchen Pal), root lama (Mula-Guru), grant me the fruit of the highest Siddhi (Mahamudra)."

Ngöndro practice begins, however, with taking refuge in a teacher from one of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism. For this act of taking refuge, the teacher recites a prayer of taking refuge which we then repeat. Next, he cuts off a lock of our hair, and we are given a Buddhist name. Following this ritual of taking refuge, we have permission to practice.

Every Ngöndro practice ends with a fire Puja conducted by the teacher. Following this ceremony, we are qualified to practice more advanced exercises. We are also qualified to go on a retreat. On such retreats, a practitioner in Tibet normally withdraws into complete seclusion for a period of three years, three months and three days in order to practice.

SHINE or the Practice of Developing Peace of Mind

In Tibet, the practice of developing a calm state of mind is called SHINE.

The most important factor when listening to spiritual instruction is our motivation, followed by our behavior.

Motivation can be understood as pure motivation for enlightenment. We listen to instruction not only for ourselves – so that we may personally profit from it – but in order that we may later guide all living beings to enlightenment.

Behavior can be understood to mean that we listen to the instructions with our full attention and do not allow ourselves to be distracted.

In terms of behavior, we make a further distinction between *physical behavior* and *mental behavior*. Mental behavior is the more important of the two. When we speak of the practice of SHINE – that is, the practice of developing peace of mind – both the mind and the body must remain calm.

The body must rest in a quiet place, without moving. Here, it is essential that we go to a place where we will not be disturbed.

When you have come to such a place, you should sit down and assume a posture in which your back is straight. Bring your legs into the lotus position and your hands into the position of meditation. If you are unable to assume the lotus position, it is also possible to practice sitting in a chair. Your eyes should be focused forward. Altogether, there are seven points that we must take into account as far as the body position is concerned. The most important of these, however, is that your back remains straight. It has been said: "The bones should carry the body. The flesh, as it were, should hang down from the bones." When we sit in a straight posture, the channels inside our bodies will also be aligned in a straight position. This is necessary so that the "wind" can flow through them unimpeded. When this is the case, the mind can achieve peace.

When we have brought our bodies into a state of calm, we must then bring our minds to a peaceful state as well. Here, it is important that we do not follow our thoughts – because if we continue to pursue our thoughts, we will not be able to bring ourselves to a state of mental peace. We must therefore aspire to reach a mental state which is as free from thoughts as possible. The "true nature of our minds" is fundamentally *pure, open and as empty as the sky*. However, the "true nature of our minds" is also obscured by the spontaneous impurity of passion, which prevents us from recognizing this pure, primordial mental nature – much in the same way that the sky is sometimes obscured by clouds. In the same way that we cannot see the sky with its stars and planets when it is covered by clouds, we are also unable to see our pure minds because they are darkened by the spontaneously occurring pollution of our passions. *Until these have been removed, we will not be able to recognize the purity of our minds.*
What are these thoughts which constantly agitate us? They are thoughts of ***hate***, of ***desire***, of ***uncertainty***, of ***pride***, of ***envy*** and of ***avarice***.

Where do these thoughts of the various passions come from? They are based on our idea of a self – an "I" – which is different from all others, and from our attachment to this idea of an independent self. This self says: "I want to be happy and free from suffering." From this idea comes our abhorrence of unhappiness and suffering. This is the source of all suffering in this world. All the pain and sorrow in the world comes from this "I" and its need for happiness.

All the happiness in this world comes from the altruistic idea of wishing for happiness for others.

When we practice the exercises for developing peace of mind, it is necessary, first of all, that we surrender our attachment to this world. Remaining attached to this life is not a behavior which can produce calm.

Desire and attachment are the opposite of mental calm. When we give up our thoughts of attachment to this world, this is also a method of reducing and finally eliminating the thoughts which constantly surface in our minds due to habit. However, this is not easy. But with constant practice, we can steadily reduce our attachment.
The process begins with contenting ourselves with the amount of money that we earn. This is the way to dwell in peace – in SHINE: by reducing our needs and becoming content with what we have. This is a very important step in the journey. At the same time, SHINE is also an antidote to our passions. If we are not able to rein in our passions through this practice, we will not be able to abide in calm.

I will give an example of the way this contentment should work. It is the example of a bee:
The bee flies to a flower and collects its pollen. However, it does not remain attached to the pollen; rather, it carries it to another place. We should content ourselves with the things that we own in the same way. Our task is also to recirculate the things that we own, but we should not remain attached to them. We are taught that if we are able to surrender our attachment to the world in the same way, the result will be a good practice of SHINE.

There are two different approaches to practicing SHINE: either with or without the use of an object to help control the mind.

When we **meditate with an object**, it is best to focus the mind on our own bodies. Within the body, it is best to concentrate on your feet, from the knees downward. You should try to evoke a sensation of energy from this place. The feet do not contain any life-sustaining organs; at the same time, they correspond to the element of Earth, which gives us strength and stability. Concentrate your mind here without allowing it to be distracted. While doing so, it is important to remain detached and relaxed. If we are not relaxed, it is not possible to maintain calm in our minds. In addition, you should only practice when in a happy mood, and communicate this mood to your feet as well. We use our feet as a kind of anchor for the mind. Since, in the course of our thoughts, we constantly lose our sense of our bodies, we must learn to bring our minds back home, into our bodies. We can achieve this through self-observation in our daily lives if we do not allow the spotlights of our attention to focus exclusively outward. Instead, with a part of our attention, we should constantly be aware of our bodies in the background. This is not easy in the beginning, since we tend to neglect to observe ourselves. It will only become easier when we have established a new habit. Two or three times a day, in a place where you will not be disturbed, you should consciously direct your attention to your

own feet in a positive spirit. You may also imagine light filling your feet from the knees downward. In the beginning, you should never practice for longer than ten minutes at a time: ten minutes every morning, noon and evening. If you are tired, or if you become tired during the exercise, it is better to take a short break.

In school and in life, we learn to put our minds to work, and we learn how to leave our bodies by means of our senses. However, we usually do not learn how to bring our minds and our bodies to a state of calm.

We have six sensory organs, of which the eyes are the most important. Therefore, it is important to keep our eyes still when we are concentrating – because if they are moving, the wind will begin to move as well. When this happens, our minds are no longer at peace. Mind, wind and eyes form a single unit. Thus, if we close our eyes and focus on an object, it is much more difficult for our thoughts to form. If thoughts still arise, then it is best to interrupt the exercise and take a break. However, we should never strain ourselves in an effort to quiet our thoughts. Nor should we practice if we are too tired. When we practice, we should be alert and in a good mood. We should not begin to analyze ourselves or our practice. When we do this, we are already returning to activity. The only thing that is important is to return to the object of concentration. In the beginning, you should only practice for a short time, then take a short break and continue the exercise. In this way, you can take up the exercise several times without practicing for too long at a single stretch.

The *object of concentration* may also be your own **protective deity**, whose mantra you repeat. When we begin trying to achieve peace of mind through this practice, it is initially still connected with our thoughts, just as when water flows down from a high mountain. When this happens, it is completely normal. You should then remain calm and continue to maintain your concentration. Little by little, as you become accustomed to the practice, a calm state of mind will predominate.

This process is comparable to water, which first gushes down from a mountain only to flow as calmly as the great Ganges River once it has reached the valley. If we continue to practice, this current will become slower and slower, until the stream of thoughts flows over into the mind which is at peace with itself – just as a river finally flows into the calm ocean. Although this state of mental calm can only be achieved through habit and without effort, it is nevertheless essentially important not to give up in your endeavors and to devote a great deal of energy to it. If your practice is disturbed by an excessive number of thoughts, it is then best to stand up, interrupt the exercise and take a few steps to in order to calm down somewhat from this agitated state.

When we speak of **Samadhi** – that is, of meditative immersion or stillness of the mind – it is necessary to **free ourselves from the five hindrances.**
We must be free from the hindrance of the *obscured mind*: this is the case when the mind is *directed too strongly outward* and is obscured by outside impressions.
Secondly, the mind must be *free from its attachments*. This happens when the mind is *directed too strongly inward* and thereby becomes set. The first is a more excited state, while the second is more of a semi-conscious state, similar to sleep.
Third, we must be free from *regret*, because this is the enemy of meditative immersion. Regret expresses itself, for example, when we think that our practice was not good enough or did not

accomplish anything.

Fourth, we must be free from the flaw of *ill will*. Nor may we allow ourselves to *fall asleep*.

In addition, we must be free from *desire and doubt*. The latter also includes the point that we must not fall asleep or become dull and listless.

All five hindrances are actually encompassed within the first two. If the mind is directed too strongly inward, it will not have the necessary strength. However, if we are in a state of excessive excitement and our minds are constantly fixed on external objects, we then need to relax more and allow our strength to subside somewhat.

The Indian Brahmin Saraha once said that the mind is like a camel. If you tether a camel, it will always want to break free. However, if you let it free, it will remain standing quietly and will not try to run away. In the same way, we cannot keep our minds quiet through force. But if we keep our minds in a relaxed state, they will become quiet. Saraha said, one should not tether the mind, but let it free. Now you must test this for yourself, because Samadhi can only be experienced for oneself.

There are two possibilities for concentrating **without an object**: either **with breath or without breath**. However, the breath is a double-edged sword. It strengthens everything that is in us, including our passions, our aggressions, etc. Therefore, if we want to practice using our breath, we must be careful not to strengthen our passions, since this will not lead to mental calm. In addition, you should only practice using your breath after you have already been instructed in concentration and are morally stable. Otherwise, you may set processes in motion which will later be difficult to control. For this reason, you should take plenty of time with the preparatory exercises and become morally and emotionally stable.

You should also have a spiritual teacher who is able to supervise your exercises.

We will first discuss the method using *Prana* or wind. You must first understand the way in which the wind circulates through the channels of our bodies. Our bodies contain many energy channels. The three main channels are a central, a solar and a lunar channel. They extend up to the crown of the head. The solar and lunar channels end at the nostrils.

Concentrate on inhaling and exhaling and on holding your breath. There are three phases of breathing: exhalation, inhalation, and the time after inhaling when we briefly hold our breath. When we use our breath in meditative practice, we connect our breathing to our minds by imagining that when we exhale, all impurities and passions leave our bodies. When we inhale, we can imagine that we are breathing in in blessings of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. When we hold our breath still, we abide in a state of immersion which is free from thoughts. There are two advantages to practicing this way.

The first advantage is the state of immersion itself; the second is that it offers us a glimpse of impermanence. When we hold our breath and abide in a state of immersion, our capacity for Samadhi benefits from this. When we breathe in or out, it benefits our understanding of impermanence. Through

the exchange of our breath, we become aware of impermanence. In addition, we should practice using our six sensory organs and their objects. Here, we begin with the eyes. When we see something beautiful, it pleases us. On the other hand, if we see something ugly, we feel disgust. The point of the exercise is *to observe the object we see with indifference*. Our thoughts function in this way: if our sensory organs perceive something pleasant, a thought of attachment arises. If we perceive something unpleasant, a thought of aversion is evoked. The same phenomenon applies to the ears and the sounds which we perceive through them. Pleasant sounds give rise to a pleasant feeling, and unpleasant sounds evoke thoughts of rejection. The same is true for the sense of smell, the sense of taste and the sense of touch. Feelings of something pleasant or something unpleasant arise through the sensory organs. These feelings then give rise to thoughts. In the progression of these three sensations, we distinguish between pleasant, unpleasant and neutral thoughts or feelings.

The objects of the sensory organs – those things which the sensory organs perceive – present strong impediments to meditative immersion. For this reason, we refer to the **external objects** as the ***thorns of Samadhi*** or of the stable mind. When we speak of decelerating in reference to halting the stream of our thoughts, we mean that we do not follow a particular thought. We are not in a position to actually stop the objects or to stop our observation of objects; rather, we can only stop the identification of the object through thoughts and perceptions. We can do this by refraining from analyzing the objects which we observe. Thus, when we observe an object, we do not think about whether or not we find it pleasing.

The most important aspect of the practice of SHINE is that we do not lose our **awareness**. Awareness is like an observer who does not interfere in a situation. We say to ourselves: "When I sit, I know that I am sitting. When I walk, I know that I am walking. When I move my hand, I know that I am moving my hand. When I inhale, I know that I am inhaling. When I exhale, I know that I am exhaling. When I feel something, I know that I am feeling something. When I think about something, I know that I am thinking about something." At the same time, I constantly feel my body in the background, and I pay attention to my mood. If my mood worsens, I brighten it up. Choose a mood which is like what you experience when you are on vacation or when you are engaged in a hobby which you enjoy very much. Try to maintain this enthusiasm throughout the day and defend it against every change which occurs, either from the outside or from the inside. If you continue this exercise over a long period of time, your external fortune will also change for the better.

Our minds are like a wild elephant, and awareness is a pillar. Endeavor and attention are like a rope which binds the elephant to the pillar. This is why it is so necessary that we do not lose our awareness – just as we need the stability of the pillar to secure the elephant.

To use another example, the mind is as unruly as a wild monkey. It goes everywhere, touches everything and causes only discord. SHINE is an exercise for taking care of the mind – and by the mind, we mean awareness. In a single day, a person breathes in and out 21,600 times. In an ideal situation, we would manage to be fully aware of each of these 21,600 times that we breathe in and out in 24 hours. This is the best way to experience Samadhi.

We can train for this state of meditative immersion by beginning to concentrate our minds on our breath and count each one. At first, count 10 breaths, then 20, 30, 100, 200, and finally 300. Then try

to extend this exercise further and further in the course of the day. We can measure our capacity for immersion using our hearts, just as one uses a watch. When we are able to concentrate on our breath to this degree, without following our thoughts – in a state that is free from thought – then we will be able to maintain a state of Samadhi.

In a healthy person, we can measure the length of inhalation, of holding the breath, and of exhalation using the pulse. It will beat five times. This period of five pulse beats is called a respiration. When we speak of 21,600 breaths, we are referring to periods of five pulse beats each. Since the pulse continues without interruption, we call it the *Wind of Karma*. When a person is unhealthy, his or her pulse will change. It becomes either weaker or faster – that is, either 3 or 6-7 pulse beats per breath. Contained within these 21,600 breaths is the so-called "wisdom wind," which occurs 775 times. These 21,600 respirations change twelve times each day. Every time the respirations change, the wisdom wind occurs in between.

We can recognize this when respiration shifts from one nostril to the other. This is the karmic wind, which changes twelve times each day. In between, there are brief moments in which the air flows equally through both nostrils. We call these moments the time of the wisdom wind. It is very advantageous to use these moments in which the wisdom wind is active for our practice, because they allow a state of calm to arise easily.

Suppose a person lives for 100 years. For every 100 years of life, the wisdom wind is active for 3 years, 1 month and 14 days. If the person does not waste this time, but uses it for meditative immersion, he or she will reach complete enlightenment within three years. Now that you are familiar with the difference between karma wind and wisdom wind, and you have received instructions on how you can use your breath as a method for reaching a state of immersion, follow these instructions and you will see what benefits you can reap from it and how purely they arise in a state of calm. Above all, pay attention to and use the period of the wisdom wind, and recognize the period of karma wind as well.

It has been said that thoughts are the great unawareness which let us fall into the ocean of Samsara, and for this reason, it is necessary to have as few thoughts as possible.

The practice of SHINE is a practice for taming the mind. All religious practices are directed toward this end. Thus, Buddha himself also said: "When you have tamed your mind, then you have reached enlightenment." But it has also been said that it is very difficult to rein in the mind. Even Milarepa said that is easier for two mountain peaks standing far apart to meet than it is for a person to tame his or her own internal mind. It easier to break a strong bough or a cow's horn than it is to break the mind. This is how difficult it is to tame the mind. Shantideva said that there is no other practice except the practice of caring for and taming the mind. There are no other practices which are useful to us.

It has also been said that it is sufficient if we are able to keep our minds stable. If we are able to do this, we do not need any other practice. I have now spoken about practicing with an object, without an object and with observation of the breath. The most important thing, however, is that through practice you find your own way to this state of calm.

As far as the practice of **concentration without an object** is concerned, this is the practice of **not allowing yourself to be distracted**. Provided that this state is free from thoughts, we can achieve it in the course of any activity – whether the activity is physical, mental or verbal. One example is religious activities, such as bowing or reciting mantras. When we simply recite the mantra "Om Mani Padme Hung" with complete awareness and without having any other thoughts, this will bring us to a state of meditative immersion.

No matter what activity we are engaged in, as long as it is carried out with full awareness and free from thoughts, it will evoke a state of meditative immersion.

If we practice SHINE, whether with or without an object or using our breath, and we sit upright with a straight back but allow our minds to wander, then the practice is completely meaningless. Then it is better to do something else, since this session will be a complete waste of time. But what state of calm is the right one? It is a state in which we do not think about the past, we do not concern ourselves with thoughts of the future and we do not analyze the present. Rather, we simply abide in the natural, calm state of the mind.

We refer to this process in which the mind returns to its natural state as **"the mind falling back into itself."** This state is also called a natural state. "Natural" literally means "not artificial." What is artificial? The artificial mind is the ordinary mind which is bound by thoughts. These thoughts may be either good or bad, but both types of thoughts tie up the mind and thereby make it artificial. This alters the natural state of the mind.

Both good and bad thoughts tie up the mind. It does not matter whether we wrap our heads in a band of gold or a band of iron: both materials will give us a headache. However, in order to achieve this state of calm and to maintain a state of meditative immersion which is free from any type of thought, it is necessary to carry out all of the appropriate preparatory exercises and, above all, to undergo a process of purification and equip ourselves with two types of merit. On this subject, Nagarjuna said:

Without **the armor of the two types of merit**, it is not possible to experience a state of voidness. What do we mean by voidness? It is **transcendent insight** (awareness) or "clear seeing." Transcendent insight in a state of complete mental calm.

Why is it necessary to arm ourselves with an **accumulation of merit**? In order to create a foundation for enlightenment. How do we do this? The two types of accumulation of merit cleanse the two types of impurities: these are karmic impurities and impurities which arise through passion. It is through this cleansing of impurities that we lay a foundation for attaining Buddhahood.

The two types of merit accumulation are as follows:
Those which we accumulate through actions and those which we accumulate through wisdom.

Accumulation of merit through actions includes the first five *Paramitas*: *generosity, discipline, patience, endeavor and concentration. It also encompasses every type of virtuous action, beginning with bowing, reciting mantras, making offerings and visiting sacred monuments.* All of

these actions accumulate merit.

The **accumulation of wisdom or insight** occurs when we abide in the pure state of our mind, free from thoughts. In this state, we accumulate the benefit of wisdom.

These two accumulations of merit are like two wings, where the beneficial actions can be seen as a **method**, while the accumulation of wisdom can be seen as **wisdom**. With these two wings, we are then in a position to elevate ourselves to Buddhahood. Thus, each person must use the methods which are useful to him or her in order to maintain a peaceful state of mind: first only for short periods of time – perhaps half an hour each day; later, you should try to maintain a state of mental calm for longer and longer periods.

There are many different types of Samadhi, or meditative immersion. SHINE or maintaining a peaceful state of mind is a synonym for Samadhi or immersion. First, there is a so-called worldly Samadhi. Next, we speak of the state of immersion achieved by the Shravakas, the "hearers." Then there is the state of immersion reached by the Pratyekabuddhas as well as that of the Arhats. Finally, there are ten other different types of Samadhi which are associated with the ten levels of Bodhisattvas. Worldly Samadhi is the Samadhi which is connected to the external flow of energy. This is the state which begins with our current state. When we begin practicing, we reach the ***first step of the stable mind***, of which there are four. These are called the four immersions of the subtle spheres.

1. The first immersion is described as being free from unwholesome states of mind, but still including discursive thought and associated with a feeling of happiness.

2. The second immersion is free of discursive thought and associated with an intense feeling of happiness.

3. The third immersion is described as "blissfully abiding in serene awareness." The third immersion leads to the opening of the inner eye.

4. In the fourth immersion, the feelings of happiness and serenity fade, and the person's being is filled with deep peacefulness. The fourth immersion forms the basis for achieving higher spiritual powers. These states are followed by the four immersions of formlessness. They are accessible to our consciousness only through the observation of our breath.

5. In the fifth immersion, our perception of our bodies disappears, and we become conscious of the "endlessness of space."

6. In the sixth immersion, after we overcome the obstacle of experiencing the "endlessness of space," we experience the "endlessness of consciousness." At this stage, the practitioner ceases to distinguish a self or "I."

7. After achieving the sixth immersion, we enter the sphere known as "nothingness and non-nothingness." This is also called the "sphere of nothing at all."

8. Finally, after achieving the seventh immersion we reach the sphere known as "neither perception nor non-perception" or "the spirit of nothing at all."

The fourth level is the highest level of immersion within the so-called worldly or ordinary Samadhi. People who are rooted in the external flow of energy are capable of reaching this level. This level – the very highest of the worldly Samadhi, which we call the spirit of nothing at all – is the level of the highly knowledgeable. They are able to abide in this state for a long period of time, but afterwards they fall back down into the lower states. Why? Because while in the state of immersion, they have not grasped the aspect of voidness in wisdom.

At this level, the knowledgeable people are endowed with clear-sightedness and miraculous powers, but an attachment to the state of immersion still exists. Because they are still attached to the state of immersion, it is a worldly state of immersion. This is where Hinduism and Buddhism differ, or part ways. All that leads beyond this are states of immersion in which an insight into the stable mind is integrated, or where method is connected to wisdom. These are states where empathy is integrated into voidness, where relative truth is integrated into absolute truth or reality – that is, where not even the smallest trace of attachment to the state of immersion exists. This is a state of immersion which cannot be fathomed through thought, nor can it be described in words. It is revealed through itself alone and can only be experienced through itself. This state of immersion that is fully free from attachment is characteristic of all the levels of immersion, the levels of Bodhisattvahood, which extend beyond worldly immersion.

The guru plays a very important role in all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism. He or she is the person who repeatedly transmits tastes of the mind's natural state to his pupils. This may occur during an empowerment or a shared concentration exercise, during a lecture or whenever it seems appropriate. These tastes are very important, since they show us how this natural state feels. After that, it is up to us to recreate it in our own practice.

LHAG THONG or the Practice of Transcendent Insight

SHINE, the practice of developing peace of mind, is described as a ***method,*** while Lhag Thong, the practice of transcendent insight (clear seeing), is described as ***wisdom***.

We distinguish between an *"I of the five Skandhas"* and an *"I of existing conditions"*. The **"I of the five Skandhas"** (five aggregates of attachment: *form, sensation, perception, mental formations, consciousness*) is our idea of an "*I" as an independent existence in a material body*, and the **"I of existing conditions"** is the idea that external objects really exist. This idea of the reality of external objects is what we need to do away with.

In the SHINE instructions, we learned that the purpose of that practice is to calm the mind and to maintain this state of calm. Now, our aim is to see the essence of this mind which we are maintaining in a state of calm. When we are abiding in a state of mental peace, it is necessary to determine whether it is now the body or the mind which is dwelling in peace. If we say that it is the mind, we must then determine whether the mind is material or not. If the mind is material, than it must have a form. It is then necessary to determine what this form is.

The point is to examine the essence of the mind – and these are the methods for doing so. If the mind has a form, then this form must have some sort of shape. If it has a form, then it must also have a color. Which one? If we examine the mind in terms of its form and color, and if we think of it as something that has a form, then we need to find out where it is located – outside, inside, or in between. Is it located in the eyes, or in the heart or in some other part of the body? The sound that we hear in our ears – is that the mind? If it is the mind, what is it like? What does it sound like? If the mind has a color, then this color and the shape of the mind must be perceptible to the eye. If it has a smell, it must be perceptible to the nose. If the mind has a taste, then it should be perceptible through taste. What does it taste like? Then we need to find out how the mind passes through the sensory organs. Does it move nimbly and quickly or slowly and gradually? Once it has appeared through the sensory organs, how does it spread further?

And if we think that the mind is something which completely fills our bodies and mixes with them the way water is mixed with tea, then the body, when it is not occupied by the mind, is a corpse. First we must find out where this mind comes from.

Where does it come from? Where does it go?

When we meditate, the purpose of Lhag Tong meditation is to seek wisdom. This is something we must see; therefore, we call this meditation "clear seeing." We see with our eyes. What do we see with our eyes? Wisdom. If *SHINE meditation* is a state in which the five Paramitas – or perfections – are present, then this is an example of a state which we say has no eyes. In the *practice of clear seeing*, we *see wisdom with our eyes*: that is the difference.

The fact is that *thoughts and the mind are inseparable*; they are not different things. Here is an

example:

"We say that the mind and thoughts are the same; but the mind is the energy of the radiance of the thoughts."

And this aspect of energy, which we identify as radiance, is called **Dharmakaya**. Thus, the mind is the Dharmakaya of thought. This thought is a truly pure state which contrasts with the impure and tarnished state of a mind which contains thoughts. These thoughts are like clouds in the sky. The essence of the mind exists, but it is obscured by impure thoughts. How are these things connected to one another? They must be connected to each other, since otherwise they could not appear; they are dependent upon one another through circumstances. Thoughts are circumstances which arise dependent upon the mind.

An example: We speak of water and we speak of ice. What is the difference? What is ice and what is water? How are they connected to one another? How does ice come into being? Ice is formed through circumstances – for example, cold. External circumstances transform water into ice. It is exactly the same with the mind and thoughts. The reverse can also be true: through external circumstances such as heat and fire, ice melts and turns back into water. It is also water, but in another state. In the same way, thoughts and the mind are one, but thoughts arise due to circumstances.

What are these circumstances which cause the mind to become thoughts? Where does the difference arise? When we see an object, the circumstances in which we perceive the object are first, the object itself and second, the ability of the sensory organs and the perception of the object through the sensory organs. Because of these circumstances, we see the object. When we abide in a state of mental peace and fixate on an object, the thought which contained the perception of the object disappears. Where does it go? Into the mind.

That which we identify as enlightenment – as Buddhahood – is the state of Dharmakaya, the state of absolute release. These are interchangeable terms. They refer to the realization or experience of the essence of one's own mind.

The non-recognition and non-realization of the essence of our own minds is called the cycle of thoughts. Thus, we do not give up our thoughts (it is impossible to give up our thoughts); rather we use them. We transform them by getting to know them. When we do this, we reach the indwelling mind, which we also call the natural mind. The term "indwelling mind" is perhaps not exactly right. A better term is the "original mind." This aspect of release of the mind – the Dharmakaya – is already contained in our thoughts, just as butter is already contained in milk. In order to obtain butter, we do not need anything from outside; the milk must simply be prepared in the right way. This preparation corresponds to the practice – the mental training – which is necessary for reaching a state of release.

This nature of the mind, which cannot be found even when subjected to in-depth analysis – that is, it cannot be grasped with our thoughts nor can it be described in words – is therefore called unimaginable and indescribable. The mind cannot comprehend the mind.

The nature of the mind is clear light. We speak of the essence of the mind and of the nature of the

mind. The essence of the mind is *empty* and the nature of the mind is *clear*. The emptiness of the essence of the mind is our own state of knowledge. The character of the nature of the mind is the state of knowledge of clarity. When we see an object, it appears to us as something concrete, such as ice. However, we have now said that the character of the nature of the mind is clarity. This clarity is the perception of an object as such, when nothing is actually there. It is the same as with ice and water: the object is perceived as ice, but it is actually water.

Why do we perceive it as ice? This is the character of the clarity of the mind's nature. Guru Rinpoche said: "We experience it as if it were nothing, through the clarity of the mind." Thus, this nature of the mind is difficult to understand and difficult to describe – but it is now important **to practice and maintain this nature of the mind**. I will now explain how we can do this.

First of all, what conditions do we require in order to practice with the mind in this way? The first condition for practicing is ***protection of the mind***. This means that we turn our backs on attachment to the world. The second condition is ***commitment***.

These conditions for meditation are like two feet. Maitreya said that in order to experience the state of wisdom which originates within us, it is necessary to have commitment. Without commitment, the realization of our mind's state of knowledge is not possible. For example: We can compare the nature of our minds to the sun; but in order to see the sun, it is necessary to have eyes. If we have no eyes with which to see the sun, this is our inability to see the nature of our minds.

This inability comes from sudden contamination. Commitment is like the head of the body. Without a head, a body cannot exist. To whom should this ***commitment*** be directed? ***To the root guru and the entire ordination lineage***. This commitment, this strong faith, is directed toward the guru as the source of all knowledge and the source of the knowledge that he or she has revealed to us in the context of our initiation. ***Our faith is directed not only to a root guru, but to all the gurus in the lineage and to all the gurus who have recognized and realized this nature of the mind.*** What is important is not to lapse into sectarian opinions. We should not differentiate between the various religious orientations; rather, our devotion should be directed toward all those who have recognized the true nature of the mind. This devotion to the guru should not be interrupted even for an instant, but remain completely concentrated. With this devotion in our hearts – which is completely directed toward the root guru and all the possessors of knowledge – we pray to the guru for this insight. Milarepa said: "The root guru is equal to the guru of the three ages, and the memory of this guru is indelibly enshrined within me."

We now come to the main part of the practice. Here, we are concerned with ***maintaining awareness in practice***, and ***this awareness is like a guardian***. ***Love and empathy are the activities in meditation***. Therefore, love and empathy are also present. *Our own minds are witness to themselves*. If we lose our awareness, this is a reason to be ashamed. We are ashamed before our guru and before all the Buddhas and before all of our Vajra brothers and sisters. We are ashamed because we have lost our awareness in practice, and this also protects us from making too little effort. This shame is like wearing clothing.

How do we maintain this awareness? By meditating. However, meditation encompasses the *habit of meditation*. Meditation becomes consistent through habit. Its consistency calls up awareness. This awareness cannot be distracted; it is stable. What does this consistency look like? It must be like our attention when we carve mantras into stone.

Now it is only necessary to practice more.

Cham dances in the Lamayuru Monastery in Ladhakh

The Rainbow Body

First, I would like to talk about the historical tradition of teaching about the rainbow body. I would like to address the following questions. Starting from Tibetan medicine's point of view about the physical body and the relationship between mind and body, I would like to address the question of why the rainbow body is able to come into being at all. The rainbow body is a subtle version of the physical body. It is a body of light.

At the beginning of existence, or of this eon, people did not live as solid physical beings the way they do now. Rather, they were more ethereal. At that time, people had what was called a body of light. There was very little difference between human beings and gods. The form that these beings took was an aggregate of the subtle qualities of the elements. There was no sexuality in the physical form that we know it today. Mental stimulation and the contact of the senses were sufficient for producing offspring. Nevertheless, these beings were still normal earthly creatures, even though they were extremely subtle. Therefore, they also had desires which arose from their contact with the world. They longed for certain things. In the beginning, they longed for food. In this way, they steadily became more solid, even though at first, they did not feed themselves in the same way we do now. They nourished themselves with an energy which enriches the air above the seas, and which has a certain taste. The first attachment was the desire for this subtle energy. Through this, people became more and more solid. Although it took a very long time, people became increasingly dependent upon physical nourishment. Finally, they became gatherers. Once, one of these people had difficulty with his digestion. He had severe pains and began to cry. Then the god Brahma came down to earth and healed him. This was the first sickness and the first act of healing.

Pangdong Lake, in the border area between Ladhakh and Tibet

The doctrine of the rainbow body was first taught by Samantabhadra to Vajrasattva. He passed it on to Garab Dorje, who taught it to Manjushrimitra, who then passed it on to Vimalamitra. The doctrine was then passed on to Padmasambhava, and so on. Finally, it was passed on to the great Tibetan master Berotsana.

All of this information is taken from the tantric texts of the Nyingmapa tradition. They are divided into three sections:

• SEMDE, dealing with the mind,
• LONGDE, dealing with underlying nature, and
• UPADESA, dealing with the key instructions.

These doctrines were not widely disseminated in India, and were virtually unknown to teachers. It is said that these doctrines were preserved by the Dakinis and saved in transcendent spheres. Tradition also says that the doctrines were recorded and hidden in cemeteries and in Bodhgaya. They were later rediscovered by a few masters and were practiced in secret. In India, there are a relatively large number of masters who have attained the ***rainbow body*** and have vanished either into this or into ***the body of great transformation***.

The Indian masters made a great secret of their practice. It was only when a master exhibited supernatural powers, or disappeared into the rainbow body at the end of his life, that people knew he must have been a tantric.

In the eighth century CE, the great masters Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra came to Tibet, and a large number of Indian texts were translated into Tibetan at that time. The most important translator was Berotsana. The transmission lineages of the practice of the rainbow body in Tibet originated with Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra and Berotsana. During Padmasambhava's time, there were many masters who were able to achieve extraordinary feats, or who vanished into the rainbow body.

Berotsana traveled to India, where he met the master Sri Singha. From him, Berotsana received very important instructions, which he wrote down and translated into Tibetan. Berotsana became a great master of this tradition. He implemented the teachings of Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra and Sri Singha about the rainbow body. He was an extraordinary man.

When Shantarakshita came to Tibet, he sought out intelligent young men to whom he could teach Sanskrit. Padmasambhava made several prophecies about where they could be found. The king, Trisong Detsen, and his ministers set out to find these men. The most outstanding young man they found was the abovementioned Berotsana. At that time he was eight years old. When they came to him and asked him where his father was, he answered: "My father has gone out to speak with someone." Then they asked him where his mother was. He replied: "My mother has gone out to buy a pair of eyes." Then he invited the men into his parents' house. When his father returned, he was drunk. When his mother came back, she had bought something which she carried in a small pot. The men asked her what was in the pot, and she said that it was oil for the lamps. Thus, even at this age, Berotsana (Tibetan: Vairotsana) already had poetic tendencies. Berotsana was his Sanskrit name.

The king provided the material resources for Berotsana's education as a pupil of Shantarakshita. He was taught Sanskrit together with a number of other boys, but he learned faster than the others. He was then sent to India, where he studied and translated many different texts. We can find all of this information in the biography of Padmasambhava. Berotsana was therefore a great scholar and translator; but at the same time, he was also very advanced in his spiritual journey. Thus, he was both a scholar and a highly advanced monk. At that time, Bön, the original religion of Tibet was still very widespread. Some devotees of Bön became jealous of Berotsana, since he was becoming increasingly famous. They spoke ill of him to the king, which led to his banishment to the most remote region of southeastern Tibet. The place was called Gyalmo Tsawa Rong, and Tibetans considered it to be one of the most unpleasant regions in the land. It is one of the hottest regions by Tibetan standards, and was therefore given its name, which means "the hot valley." It was very difficult for

Berotsana when he first came to Tsawa Rong. The native people treated him badly. They were not the least bit religious and were not interested in spiritual matters. They were also very violent people, and they threw Berotsana into prison. However, thanks to his extraordinary spiritual attainment, this treatment had little effect on him. One day, it is said, he flew through the air with his legs crossed and landed at the topmost point of the local king's castle. He converted the king to belief in the Dharma and became the spiritual teacher of the people of this small kingdom. Many of his most important pupils came from Tsawa Rong – one of them being Yudra Nyingpo. Thus, while Berotsana was teaching in Tsawa Rong, he once again became more and more well known. There was a village in Tsawa Rong called Daksche Kar, which was home to an old man named Pang Mipam Gonpo. He was 85 years old. His greatest wish in life had been to meet Berotsana just one time. At that time, Pang Mipam Gonpo was very old, and his family treated him badly. The old man had therefore developed a kind of chronic depression. He sat by himself, abandoned by everyone, and prayed that he might one day meet Berotsana. Thanks to his supernatural abilities, Berotsana sensed this, and he felt great empathy for the old man. One day he sought him out and introduced himself, saying: "I am Berotsana." For the old man, this was an unbelievable experience. His eyelids had become so flaccid that he could no longer see, so he placed two dry straws between his eyelids to hold them open. When he saw Berotsana, he was so thrilled that he embraced him for a long time. Berotsana began instructing the old man, but the latter had difficulty remembering the things he had learned. After all, he was 85 years old! He therefore began to use memory woodblocks to help him remember how many lessons he had had each day. When it was time for the old man to learn meditation, he could no longer sit up straight, so he was given a meditation strap and a *gomkar*. This is a short stick with a fork at the end on which the old man could rest his chin. This allowed him to sit up straight. Having received his teacher with such incredible veneration, Pang Mipam Gonpo was able to *integrate his entire being into his practice*. Upon his death, the old man vanished into the rainbow body. He was just over 100 years old at that time, and he was possessed of endless supernatural knowledge. He also had a pupil of his own. This man had come from Gokar and had heard of Pang Mipam Gonpo and how he became the pupil of Berotsana, so he went to Pang Mipam Gonpo to receive instruction. His name was Tschang Tschug Gyaltsen. He was 67 years old when he met Pang Mipam Gonpo, and he received all of his teachings. Among other things, he was told that he must never return to his home, but must go to a place called Wa Senge Drak. Senge Drak means "Lion's Rock." He was to spend the rest of his life there. Senge Drak is a holy place in Tsawa Rong. Tschang Tschug Gyaltsen lived for 172 years; when he died, he left no body behind, but vanished into the rainbow body. Both scholars left behind only their fingernails and their hair.

Tschang Tschug Gyaltsen also had only one pupil. He came from the western part of East Tibet, and his name was Rinchen Jig. He, too, was told that he must not return to his home, but should spend the rest of his life at the Lion's Rock and meditate. At the age of 144, he too vanished into the rainbow body. He also had a pupil who came from Jalong. He was a monk named Kuntschur Selwe Tschok. He was 57 years old when he met Rinchen Jig. He also received all the teachings and remained at the Lion's Rock for the rest of his life. Kuntschur Selwe Tschok lived to be 117 years old. Three teachers in unbroken succession left this world through the rainbow body at exactly the same place. Many pupils followed them in the same way, leaving behind only their fingernails and hair after their deaths.

But this has even happened in our own time. There are two possible ways to vanish into the rainbow

body. The first is that ***the body dissolves into light and disappears, leaving only the fingernails and hair behind***. This is called the **rainbow body without remains**.

The other way calls for a practice through which, in the process of dissolving, a transformation into a subtle form takes place through an influx of energy. This can deliberately manifest itself either in the Buddha realm or in this material world. This is called the **rainbow body of great transformation**.

Many people have achieved the first result, but very few have attained the body of great transformation. In India, it was attained by Jivaka and a significant number of other masters. A few masters in Tibet and a few in China have also attained it.
Vimalamitra was an Indian master who taught in Tibet and who attained the body of great transformation. It is said that he now lives in China, in a region called Wutai Sahn – "Five-Peaked Mountain" – in northeastern Shanxi Province. It is not easy to reach this place, but if you do, it is possible that you might encounter Vimalamitra there. But even if you do meet him, he will probably be difficult to recognize if you have not been introduced to him.

In Tibet, there was a master named Samar Gorku, who also attained the body of great transformation. He lived in the nineteenth century – possibly even into the twentieth century – in his physical body. He met Jamyang Knyentse Wangpo and Mipam Gonpo, and must therefore have lived at around the same time.

Jamyang Knyentse Wangpo was a hermit who lived for most of his life in seclusion. He possessed great knowledge about things that people normally do not see unless they are clairvoyant. In the light of his mind, he saw the Siddha who lived in the northern part of Koncho. He sent Mipam Gonpo and several others there to visit him. However, when they arrived in this secluded place, none of them could find the Shiddha. They waited for several days, but no one came. Finally, late one afternoon, Mipam Gonpo saw something that looked like a great herd of sheep and goats – about one hundred of them, approaching the group from a great distance. Shepherds were dimly visible behind them. As they came closer, Mipam realized that it was not a herd of sheep or goats, but around one hundred wild Tibetan sheep. The shepherd who followed them was naked, with long, mat-like hair. It must be noted here that this region is frigidly cold. Mipam and the other travelers were convinced that this must be Samar Drubthob, the Siddha they had been waiting for. They went to him and asked: "Are you Samar Drubthob?" And the man answered: "Are you Samar Drubthob?" Mipam immediately realized that he was speaking with a man who was at the last stage of transformation before vanishing into the rainbow body. At this point, sounds are only echoes which no longer have any meaning. Mipam then sent a member of his group to bring some alcohol. The errand took several days. When the man returned, they gave the naked man a small amount in order to bring him back somewhat from his state of transformation. Mipam then asked him who his teacher was; the man answered that his teacher was Drubthob Rinpoche, also called Mahasiddha Rinpoche. With this, he can only have meant Thang Tong Gyalpo, who had lived in the sixteenth century. Thus, he had lived for several hundred years in his physical body and was at the very end of his spiritual development, before vanishing into the rainbow body. Mipam requested that he instruct him in the Dharma, and the man recited the 8000 verses of the Prajna Paramita from memory.

The father of a lama named Tschodra also vanished into the rainbow body. He was around 80 years

old when he died, in 1954. There were several teachers who disappeared into the rainbow body at around the same time. This man hid his spirituality completely from the outside world. No one knew that he had ever practiced. Near the end of his life he lived in a cave. He also had children: one of his sons was a Khenpo, an educated man. Another one of his sons was Lama Tschodra. Most people thought that he was a stonemason who carved mantras in the stones that lay around his cave. But a few people noticed that he meditated, because when no one was nearby, he sat in the meditation posture. When he heard someone coming, he would pick up his hammer and begin chiseling mantras into the stones. One day he said that he did not feel well and that he would soon die. In reality, he was not sick at all; nevertheless, he died shortly thereafter. In Tibet, it is customary that when someone dies, a lama is invited to perform *Phowa* for the deceased person and recite a few prayers for him or her. Thus, a lama was summoned, but when he came and saw the body, he realized that it was not necessary to perform Phowa. When astrological calculations were made as to what should be done with the body, it was determined that it should be left in peace for several days. The body was then completely bound together with cloth, with the knees against the chest. Then lamps were placed near the body. The people who observed the body noticed small clouds of light emerging from the fully wrapped body. The body emitted no odor whatsoever, and it appeared to become smaller. The lama then ordered that no one should touch the body until a district government official had seen it. The official opened the bandages in front of the assembled family and many other witnesses, but the body had disappeared. All he found were fingernails and hair, but nothing else. The man who undid the bandages was Tschagjel Namtschen Dorje, a well-known government official in India. He was willing to answer questions about this event at any time.

How can such an astonishing phenomenon occur? People have *five special channels in the center of their hearts*. These are also called ***light channels***. They are very fine, having the thickness of one-tenth of a hair on a horse's tail. The central channel is called "the emperor." It is white and hollow. This channel was already known to people in Tibet 3000 years ago. It was called Yangtschi Karpo. Four channels radiate in four directions from this emperor channel; they are called the four ministers. The first of these is white. It contains the subtle essence of the subtle essence of masculine power. The second channel is red, and contains the subtle essence of the subtle essence of feminine blood. The third channel contains the subtle essence of the subtle essence of breath; it is yellow. This yellow is rather like a golden glow, such as that which appears as a golden mist above the earth when gold is located below the earth. The fourth channel is colored like a rainbow; it contains the subtle essence of the subtle essence of radiance – that is, of the individual's aura. These channels are very fine and are all equal in strength. *These channels control whether or not we possess the life energy to keep us alive.* Thus, these channels control the most exquisite levels of our being.

There is a certain dependency between the subtle and material qualities of the individual. When a person develops his or her mind, he emphasizes the subtle qualities more and more. This increase in subtle energies diminishes the coarse and solid nature of the individual.

In the last stages of this development, the person has accumulated such a large amount of subtle energy that his material body will completely dissolve and disappear at the end of his life. The Indian masters Tilopa and Naropa largely achieved this transformation from material to subtle essences.

We all possess the seeds of attaining the rainbow body within us. The more we reduce the material

qualities of our being and strengthen the subtle qualities, the closer we will come to achieving it.

There are many different traditions in this world. These are a few ideas from one of them. Strong faith and a great deal of energy are necessary if you wish to follow such a path. You will also need a master who can teach this tradition. However, it is possible that the master – even if he is intelligent, advanced and knowledgeable in the teachings – is not very energetic; he may even be lazy. He could pass the teachings on to a pupil who is not only devout but very energetic. In the end, it might happen that the pupil vanishes into the rainbow body at his death rather than the master.

Perhaps the rainbow body is very far away. But if you have a real and strong relationship to it, then perhaps it is not far away at all.

There are some lamas who, although they do not die in the rainbow body, nevertheless manifest signs indicating that they have nearly reached this stage. Then the body shrivels up significantly, or relics may be released from the body after death, in the form of small pearls or relics in the five colors.

In addition, there is a phenomenon called ***Thutam***. This is a case in which the body of a master does not decay; rather it remains almost as it was during his or her lifetime.

The key to all advancement on the spiritual path, however, is honest striving toward enlightenment. The foundations for an honorable aspiration toward enlightenment are love and empathy. The practice begins with taking refuge, and with the four fundamental thoughts.

Two lamas welcoming HH Chetsang Rinpoche to a monastery on the way to Kashmir

About the Author

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